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ABSTRACT

A brief look at a cross-cultural perspective of the forcible sexual abuse of women by men reveals a wide range of allowed expression. The ethnologists point out the intimate connection between the aggressive and sexual drives in the animal. A significant change has been occurring, with increasing public acceptance that sexual gratification without violence is available to most people who seek it, which may work to mitigate assertion. Changes in the status of women have affected the meanings attached to rape. Increasing pressure on the criminal justice system has been made to improve the arrest and conviction rate of rapists. The hypothesis of the attached study states that young black males who are presently in college do not significantly differ from the male population as a whole in their perception of rape. Questionnaire items examined the attitudes about rape, rapists, punishment or treatment for offenders, and response choices of the victim after the attack. Among younger black males, many myths about rape persist: among those over 21 years of age, attitudes are similar to their white counterparts. Society has a long way to go in educating the public about rape. (Author/BMW)

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"CAMPUS ATTITUDES TOWARD RAPE: SOME REFLECTIONS OF BLACK COLLEGE STUDENTS"

Ralph R. Speas and Claiburne B. Thorpe

"Nature has given women so much power that the law has very wisely given them little."[12]

Samuel Johnson

"I started out by practicing on black girls in the ghetto ..and when I considered myself smooth enough, I crossed the tracks and sought out white prey."[2]

Eldridge Cleaver

"Women of any color, are objects to be used in the war between man and man."[16]

Medea & Thompson

While our review of the literature indicated that a strong case may be made for the point of view that far more men than women are raped daily in this country (in jails and prisons),[20 21] this paper will focus on the current forcible abuse of women by men. This abuse is sexual in its connotation through the federal government's legal definition of rape

> ". . . the carnal knowledge of a female through the use or the threat of force."[3]

Assaults to commit forcible rape are also included; however statutory rape (without force) is not counted in this category.

The one very obvious generalization concerning human sexuality which applies to all known cultures is that each society shapes, structures and constrains the development and expression of sexuality in all its members. William Davenport emphasizes a second basic principle which pertains to the nature and function of socio-economic controls when he says rules for sexual conduct are not comprehensible in isolation. They can be understood only in relation to other regulations that may have nothing to do with sex.[5]

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First we will take a brief look at a cross-cultural perspective of the forcible sexual abuse of women by men.

Review of the available literature reveals a wide range of allowed expression - from the Arapesh who know nothing of rape beyond the fact that it is the unpleasant custom of the Nugum people to the southeast of them; to the normal intercourse patterns of the Manus as a kind of ritualized rape;[15] to the emerging youthful science of psychology's interpretation of rape as sadism -" Rape is clearly an act combining aggressive and sexual drives. The ethnologists have pointed out the intimate connection between the aggressive and sexual drives in the animal. They describe the many similarities and often precarious separation between the behavioral patterns of fighting and mating....Motives of power, control and even destruction link up with sexual motives . . . there are many ways in which sexual and aggressive energies and motives can and do fuse."[4]

> "Forcible rape is defined as a crime in every stable society. Fear of rape underlies most of the fears and unrealistic concerns which govern our attitudes toward sex offenders. There is of course much more than sadism involved in rape. Many rapists are individuals who are plagued with doubts as to their own masculinity, and some are deeply troubled by latent homosexual conflicts. Quite frequently in our society latent homosexual fears are associated with paranoid attitudes toward the world and particularly toward females, who threaten the... masculine image. The rapist tends to see all women as seductive, depriving and dangerous. He frequently vascillates between perceiving them as frightening giantesses or as lesser beings. In his attacks upon women he both conquers his fears and confirms their inferiority."[7]

The ascribed role of women in the vast majority of human societies has been that of mate and mother, with the division of labor dependent upon the utilitarian capacity of the female. Humans have carried out

this division of labor however, in a manner which results in the female being treated as a possession first, as a mate and mother second.

> "The problem of rape is not a separate and distinct issue . . so long as women are treated as less than human beings, they will be raped. Rape is only a symptom of the massive sickness called sexism, and the sickness itself must be cured." [16]

Susan Griffin in 1971 expressed the relevant principle operant in modern technological societies when she said that rape is not the isolated act of an aberrant individual, but a crime against women that is encouraged by a sexist society; that women are seen, in our culture, not as whole human beings, but as objects and authorized victims of male aggression.[6]

A significant change has been occuring in this country with increasing public acceptance of the opinion that sexual gratification without violence is available now to most people who seek it, which may operate to mitigate assertion. In addition, changes in the status of women have affected the meanings attached to rape. While vestiges of the attitude that many women are Victorian, puritan underdogs - innocent and unresponsive still persist, the rapist continues to be depicted as a lurking monster defiling the pure, the assumption being, of course, that you cannot rape a prostitute. These changing societal conditions cause the rapist to stand out today as <u>sociologically</u> abnormal. Previously he was seen as committing an act that made him go far beyond others to obtain sex that was equally unavailable to others; that is, he was likely to be defined as being <u>psychologically</u> abnormal.

Petras argues that today the rapist functions in a cultural situation where others are also, by the same reasoning, obtaining <u>more</u> sex, although

in a culturally acceptable fashion. The idea of having to get sex through violence becomes all the more abhorrent when there is general agreement that it is easier to obtain sex without violence than it was previously. Rape represents, par excellence, the use of sexuality, not only for its own sake (which is still mildly condemned) but, more importantly, with an absolute detachment of consent and emotionality from the act itself.

> "With the underdog status of women being challenged, coupled with changes in the meaning of sexuality, the rapist is coming to be defined as someone who acts in terms of violence directed against culturally defined sex objects who do not behave in terms of the definition imposed upon them by the male-dominated society. . . . A prevalent belief among males is that all women secretly (or at least unconsciously) want to be raped. It is as if a fantasy, e.g., being raped, or engaging in sex with a partner of the same sex, or with an animal, and so on, can be transplanted into a <u>desire</u> for the behavior." [18]

Molly Haskell feels the difference between 'rape fantasy' and true rape can be expressed in one word: control. ". . . the essence of the fantasy is its appeal not to the libido but to the head: it is the <u>woman</u> who chooses the who, when, where, rather than waiting to be chosen." [8]

> More and more today then, "Rape is perceived not so much as an attack upon the body but the person, and this attitude is reflected in the fact that rape is not defined with reference to the symbolic desanctification or the intrusion of one body on another. Correspondingly, the penalty often is related to the perceived innocence, sanctity, or seductiveness of the victim... Today the basis for the taboo is more closely tied to desanctification - an invasion of the privacy of the person victimized. It is not so much the physical violence that is condemned as the violence that represents a complete reification of the person as a sex-and-violence <u>object</u> and nothing else." [18]

W.I. Thomas' classic chauvinistic statement sets the stage:

> "if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences." [17]

The power of the self-fulfilling prophecy is perhaps nowhere more manifest than in society's male-oriented symbols and mythology of power.

> "The main reason why women find it hard to break into the world of power is not so much that men put obstacles in their way but rather that power is thought of as being essentially male. The rituals of power are those of male-bonding groups, and however successful a woman might be, it is difficult for her to project a corresponding degree of power . . . From childhood on, at every level, the symbol of ultimate authority tends to be a man, in one guise or another."

(While women may have access on papaer to considerable portions of the nation's wealth):

> "At the top, however, men still retain power; and their view of power and the ways in which they symbolize it, continues to determine the picture that most people below them have of power itself." [12]

The ultimate authority for most believers is of course a male god, not unlike Michelangelo's painting on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, reaching out to give life to a white man. Socialization to this gender model assumes masculine control for most little girls and boys; and as we can see, particularly applies to the social process of rape.

Contemporary Overview

Review of the literature on forcible rape for contemporary American society indicates much the same range of behavior exhibited by the cross-cultural perspective, but with the following significant difference. All children are brought up to regard rape as male domination of women- from the completely amoral use of the female as a tool, as only a means to an end, to the intensity of involvement epitomized by Bigger Thomas in Richard Wright's NATIVE SON when he tries to explain just before his execution,

> "I din't know I was really alive in this world until I felt things hard enough to kill for em." [13]

From all this, then, what do the most recent available federal statistics indicate? While a forcible rape is reported approximately every nine minutes in this country,[3] rape of a female by a male very seldom culminates in death. According to a Center For Women Policy Study HANDBOOK for 1975: "Not only is rape the fastest growing of the Index Crimes Against The Person, but among these it has the lowest proportion of cases closed by arrest."[9] In 1976, 52 out of every 100,000 females in this country were reported rape victims. Due primarily to fear of reprisal by the perpetrator and the perceived need to avoid public exposure, this offense is probably one of the most under-reported crimes in the nation. Seventy-four per cent of all rape offenses were by force in that same year, while 19 per cent of all forcible rapes reported to police were determined by investigation to be unfounded. Of the total forcible rapes reported in 1976 to law enforcement, only 52 per cent were closed by arrest. All arrests for 1976 compared to 1972 indicates an increase of 30 per cent. That same year, 51 per cent of those persons arrested for forcible rape were white, 47 percent black, and all other ethnic groups comprised the remainder. Forty-two per cent of the adults prosecuted were found guilty of the substantive offense and 9 per cent were convicted of lesser offenses.[3] This means approximately half those brought to trial were set free.[3] In 1976 there were 56,730 reported rape victims in the United States. If it is true that this crime is heavily under-reported, a projected figure of an annual forcible rape of women of 200,000 or more is not unreasonable.

The North Carolina Council On The Status Of Women reported in October 1977 that their project Aftermath indicated so far that more than 75 per cent of the respondents in a call-in survey on sexual assaults or rapes said they sought no medical attention or legal assistance.[19] Since it

is highly unlikely that these women simply accept their sexual abuse, what kind of simmering frustration and hatred is this male behavior creating over time in their minds?

Increasing pressure on the criminal justice system to improve the arrest and conviction rate by an increasingly aware and concerned public as well as feminist advocates places the system in somewhat of a double-bind...

> "When pressing for a better rate of arrest and conviction, it is very important to remember that in this country rape and racism are too closely intertwined to deal with one without the other. In many states the rape laws have been almost exclusively to keep black men away from white women. This is a fact and one which must be faced when asking for more and better prosecution." [16]

Medea and Thompson go on to warn that feminist and anti-rape groups may be used as a tool of the racist society to further persecute black males. They urge awareness of this possibility while continuing to press for identification, arrest and conviction of all rapists of whatever background. Already in the Georgia legislature this dilemma has caused bitter divisions in that state's 23 member black caucus, in the vote for a bill that repeals a previous state statute which requires a woman to provide proof and evidence of being raped.[10]

The perception of rape by black males is a little-explored area despite their obvious disproportionate involvement in the crime. According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports for 1976,[3] 46.6 per cent of all Americans arrested for rape were black, which is revealing when we consider their total national representation in the population is something around 20 per cent.

> "Statistics from the U.S. Dept. of Justice show that of all men executed for rape in these United States since 1930... 89 per cent have been black. (While the race of the victims was not specified) ..Heavier sentences imposed on blacks for raping white women is an incontestable historic fact." [1]

Findings

This paper examines the general tendency of black males - (the study also included responses from black females and white males and females) late teenagers vs. young adults in a small black university- to respond in specific ways to this increasingly visible public concern. Would they, like Ron Karenga ("In Defense of Sister Joanne,")[11] consider rape primarily as an expression of chauvinistic white male racism; or would they fit the standard mold of the feminist perspective

> "that oppressed males take on the values of those who have oppressed them"?

We hypothesized the latter - that young black males who are presently in college do not significantly differ from the male population as a whole in their perception of rape. One might argue that young black college males today are not really "oppressed." We maintain this is largely a matter of degree, but still a fact in a white male-dominated society.

While a few comparisons are made with black females and both male and female whites from the same questionnaire, we will focus in this paper on the following profile of the black males responding. They come from a primarily suburban area; nearly all were living in a dormitory with a roommate; the overwhelming majority are Protestant and consider themselves slightly religious; they consider themselves politically moderate to somewhat liberal; and about one-half of the older group's (21 & older) parents did not complete grade school, while nearly one-third of the younger group's (16-20 years) parents did not.

One item in the questionnaire aimed at the perception of the rapist and the degree of social control that society should exercise toward him. Respondents were asked to classify a person convicted of this offense

as being either sick and in need of treatment, or a flagrant violator of social mores that society should execute. When race was held constant and sex allowed to vary, 30 per cent of the black females less than 21 years of age answered affirmatively, while only 18 per cent of the black males in this age bracket did likewise. For that group 21 and over the percentages were 28 and 13 respectively. In each case then, the black females tended to favor punishment rather than treatment moreso than the black males when under the age of 21.

The literature suggests that younger women are victims of rape more often. Perhaps the younger element of our sample of black females is aware of this, so the fact that a larger percentage of them (as opposed to the 21 and older females) favored severe punishment, may be a reflection of their fear or apprehension of potential rape. The same logic may be applicable in explaining the epsilon difference between female respondents and male respondents as a whole. This difference however, was not very large, only + 4.

When we look at the respondents by race no significant difference is found. With the level of significance set at .05 a chi square value of 1.24 was obtained. When the respondents were examined by sex a somewhat similar situation was found. Again with the level of significance set at .05 the value of chi square was .31. This lack of a significant difference characterized all of the various racial sex categories except that of the white males and black males. In the case of this latter group the chi square value obtained was 5.09. The white males were significantly more in favor of punishment than were the black males. Over 80% of the black males said no to execution for a convicted

rapist, but nearly 50% of white males of all ages surveyed said yes, they would put him to death.

The history as well as present penal statistics of black males accused of rape are replete with the extreme difficulty of being exonerated or avoiding severe punishment, even death, as opposed to the white male population. We suggest that one possible explanation for the significant difference between the male racial components of the study can be attributed to a conscious or even unconscious identification by the black respondents with their predecessors. Put another way, we suggest a 'consciousness of kind' factor in the nature of Franklin Giddings.[14]

Another strong difference of opinion emerges, this time between the two age groups of black males when they are asked if rape could happen to nice people. Conforming more to the hypothesis, over half those 20 and younger feel it does not, while over 90 per cent of the 21 and older group agree that it not only can but does. Obviously the younger group needs to let go of the myth that is still being perpetuated-that the victim must somehow also be at fault. While nearly half this younger age group feels that observalbe physical injury should be apparent in a rape victim, over 90 per cent of the older group agrees that it need not. Again conforming more to the hypothesis, the younger group still apparently falls prey to the standard chauvinistic attitude that unless the victim violently struggles continuously and bears appropriate scars, she must have consented at least in part, and may even have enjoyed herself. The reality of the terror that brute force, oftentimes with a knife or gun, can bring to the rape victim, is not lost on the older, perhaps wiser group.

Over 75 per cent of the black male younger age group feels that the rape victim cannot count more on needed support from the medical and legal

system than from family and friends; while only half the older age group agrees. The older the black male respondent the more willing they are to turn to institutional help outside the family. Slightly over half the younger age group feels black females are more likely to be raped by white males, again conforming to the myth, while the older age group clearly perceives the reality that the great majority of ethnic rape is intraracial with their 70 per cent disagreement. Twice as many younger age group black males feel a divorced or single female is less respectable than married women and virgins than the older males. Age appears to be a significant factor in perception of rape.

Finally, response to the item asking what the victim should do immediately after the attack is revealing. Given the choice between reporting the attack to the police, or calling a rape hotline counselor for instructions, the overwhelming majority of respondents would first call the police. This response is difficult to assess. While it is quite possible that, due to the relatively recent availability of rape counselors and companions, they are not aware of this nation-wide, primarily feminist service. But should they <u>be</u> aware of this increasingly publicized movement, they still choose to look for aid from an organization traditionally antithetical to both ethnic minority and female rights. Perhaps also, more diligent minority recruitment and promotion practices of some of these police departments are paying off in terms of greater trust being placed in the organization as a whole.

Whatever the reasons, our examination of the literature on the forcible rape of females by males, along with the responses to this study, indicate to us that we still have a long way to go in changing the society to change the crime. Carolyn Hursch, in her book THE TROUBLE WITH RAPE 'Chicago,

Nelson-Hall, 1977) leaves us with the following new approaches needed through the criminal justice system:

> "(1) the victim must be placed in a better position from which to make her case, (2) the victim must not be expected to bear the burden of financial losses which she suffers as a result of being sexually assaulted, and (3) the legal system must provide, not for just the temporary restraining and punishment of the sex offender, but for appropriate treatment; in treatable cases, to insure that after his term is served, he will not be put out on the streets again to start the same process all over."

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